LGBT/ENGL 265: LGBTQ+ Literatures & Media
University of Maryland
Spring 2025

(v10 updated april 10 2025)

Course Syllabus & Schedule

LGBT/ENGL 265: Queer Media Histories

instructor: Dylan Lewis (he/him), dplewis@umd.edu
office hours & location: MW 2:00 – 3:00pm in JMZ 4122
class time & location: MWF 1:00 – 1:50pm in TWS 0234

course description

What makes a work of literature, film, or other work of art queer? In this course we'll be exploring queerness—conceptually, formally, affectively— by examining and discussing a broad array of media by and/or about LGBTQ+ people from a diversity of backgrounds, time periods, genres, and styles. Topics in the course include the social construction and regulation of sexuality and gender, performance and performativity, intersectionality, and the relationship between aesthetic form, genre, and queer subjectivity. We will interrogate these themes through a variety of media genres such as poetry, prose fiction, film, music, drag performance, video games, art, and other artistic mediums.

We will examine LGBTQ+ media through the lens of queer theory, a set of specific critical strategies that have emerged as an important field in literary studies over the last three decades, as well as through affect theory, a theoretical régime centered around feelings and emotions. Because of the sheer number of texts and the limitations of one semester, this syllabus cannot, of course, provide a totalized view of global LGBTQ+ art, culture, or literature. However, we will aim to think capaciously, across temporal, geographical, and theoretical borders, so that our skills are transferable to the queer media and cultures outside of the confines of this course.

This is a reading & discussion intensive course, so the bulk of the work you will do this semester as an individual will be reading and reflecting on the assigned texts and media, and as a classmate will be discussing, questioning, and responding to the ideas of your peers (and professor). Be prepared to come to class every day to enthusiastically discuss, critique, praise, or question the course material!

note on course content
In this course we will speak frankly about sex, gender & sexuality, bodies, and other potentially sensitive topics. Please approach these conversations, and each other, with maturity, respect, and an open mind. We are thinking about these things in an academic context as cultural critics & historians. In addition, some of our texts will include mentions of homophobia & transphobia, self-harm, suicide, racism, and other forms of violence. I will do my best to provide content warnings for particularly violent or shocking material. If you are concerned about particular issues, please let me know and I am more than willing to give you notice about specific content or work with you in other ways!

textbook and readings
I've worked to make most of the readings free on ELMS or accessible digitally. There are a few films & tv episodes that you will view outside of class at home, which may require you to buy/rent the film from YouTube/Amazon or have an HBO or Netflix subscription. I will have more info about accessing these as they come up in class! For books, there is only one to purchase:

• Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* (Mariner Books Classics, paperback, 2017). ISBN: 978-0544709041 [any edition should be fine! Please acquire this by the third week of the course through the cheapest method possible]

assignments
Here's the breakdown for the class:

• attendance, freewriting, and participation (25%)
- As this is a discussion-intensive course, it is expected that you will come to class every day, on time, ready to engage with the material for the day. Active participation means paying attention and listening when the professor or other students are speaking, turning in in-class freewriting assignments, contributing to the class discussion, and participating in group activities.

• close reading (10%)
- For this assignment you will complete a short close reading essay. Close reading is a method of literary analysis which focuses on the specific details of a short passage, image, or scene in a media work in order to discern some deeper meaning present in it. You will do a close reading (~2pp. double spaced; ~650-750 words) of a singular passage or part of a scene in a text or film discussed in the course. The close reading is a deep dive into a particular moment in a text or other form of media that is pivotal for understanding a central concept, mood, emotion, or formal device in the larger work.

• zine + artist's statement (10%)
- You will begin working on a zine in class and then finish at home. You will also compose a short artist's statement explaining the theme, aesthetic, and/or form of the zine. Scans/pictures of the zine should be uploaded, along with the artist's statement, on ELMS. The zine should have a central theme related to some aspect of your identity (how you see yourself re: gender and sexuality, a racial, ethic, or religious identity that is important to you, your politics, your interests or hobbies, etc.); think of your zine as a kind of representation of your 'self', the body as a book. The artist's statement should be ~250-300 words and should discuss the theme of your zine and the creative decisions and strategies that went into its creation.

• **lavender lens: art (20%)**
  - For this assignment you will visit either: the National Gallery of Art, the National Portrait Gallery, the Hirshhorn Museum, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the National Museum of African American History & Culture, or another instructor-approved museum in order to observe queerness as it appears in works of art. You will fill out a distributed guidebook (Margaret Middleton's "Looking for Queer Possibility in the Museum") and write a short (~650 word) queer reading of one work of art (or a small cluster of related works) at the museum. The goal of this assignment is to practice close reading strategies outside of the classroom, using your skills of analysis to interpret queerness or non-normativity in art through genre, content, and/or form even when queerness is not explicit or intended.

• **final project (35%; 5% proposal, 5% presentation, 25% project)**
  - For the final project you will either: 1) compose a critical essay (~8+pp. double spaced, excluding works cited) on some aspect of LGBTQ+ media we have discussed in the course OR 2) propose a creative project that engages with course themes, discussions, or material that includes a short artist's statement. Either option should center LGBTQ+/queer literature and/or media! This assignment also includes an initial proposal written to me and a presentation to the class.
  - For the proposal, outline your plans for the final project (~1-2 pages, double spaced). Your plans may change as you work—that's okay! This is just a way for me to give preliminary feedback, advice, etc. If you are composing a critical essay, which text(s) are you writing about and what is your tentative argument? If you are doing a creative project, what are you planning doing? How 'long' will it be? What are the components? After reading your proposal, I should have some idea of what you are trying to do (whether it be an essay or a creative project), what it will look like, and how I should approach grading it.
  - For the presentation, you will have 4-5 minutes to present your project to the course. How you do this is up to you, as long as you are using your full 5 minutes to talk about and engage us in what you worked on (either an essay or a creative project)

A+: 97-100	B+: 87-89	C+: 77-79	D+: 67-69	F: 0-59
A: 93-96	B: 83-86	C: 73-76	D: 63-66	
A-: 90-92	B-: 80-82	C-: 70-72	D-: 60-62	

All assignments are due on ELMS at 11:59pm eastern time on their assigned due date unless specified otherwise. **I am unable to accept late work without talking to me prior to the deadline to arrange an extension!**

acknowledgments
All syllabi are communal. This syllabus and course schedule has been constructed from my own education and experiences, and I am thankful for the input and guidance of Elizabeth Dinneny, Stephen Guy-Bray, and Andrew Selcer.

ENGL/LGBT 265 FALL 2023 COURSE SCHEDULE

Day	Topic	Assignments & Discussions
unit 1: introduce! historicize! theorize!		
Week 1		
Mon, Jan 27	**Introductions | Syllabus**	**Before class:** read the Course Syllabus & Schedule, Course Policies, and look around our ELMS site. **In class:** No class! Instructor is out of town. Please complete the Introduction discussion board on ELMS.
Wed, Jan 29	**What is Queer Media?**	**Before class:** read the Course Syllabus & Schedule, Course Policies, and look around our ELMS site and complete the Introduction discussion board on ELMS. **In class:** quick introductions, discussing the reading, talking about queer media
Fri, Jan 31	**ACT UP & the AIDS epidemic**	**Before class:** watch *United in Anger: A History of ACT UP* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MrAzU79PBVM] and read Queer Nation, *QUEERS READ THIS!* [ELMS] **In class:** discussing the AIDS epidemic & ACT UP and looking at the ACT UP Oral History Project
Week 2		
Mon, Feb 3	**Why Does Queer Studies Matter? | Queer Theory**	**Before class:** read Sedgwick, "Queer and Now" from *Tendencies* [ELMS] and Halperin, "The Normalization of Queer Theory" [ELMS] **In class:** introducing queer theory and discussing the readings
Wed, Feb 5	**Queer Reading, pt. 1**	**Before class:** read Crawley, "Queer Reading" from *Encyclopedia of Queer Studies in Education* [ELMS] and Shakespeare, *Sonnets* (excerpts) **In class:** discussing queer reading and analyzing Shakespeare's *Sonnets*
Fri, Feb 7	**Queer Reading, pt. 2**	**Before class:** read Swift, "The Lady's Dressing Room" [ELMS] and Poe, "The Masque of the Red Death" [ELMS] **In class:** analyzing Swift & Poe **** introduce Lavender Lens: Art assignment**

Week 3		
Mon, Feb 10	**Queer Affect**	**Before class:** read Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power" [ELMS] and Queer Nation, *QUEERS READ THIS!* [ELMS] **In class:** discussing affect theory and the readings
Wed, Feb 12	**Stonewall & Queer Activism**	**Before class:** read Combahee River Collective, *The Combahee River Collective Statement* [ELMS] and Cohen, "Punks, Bulldagers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics" [ELMS], and browse the Library of Congress's Stonewall page [https://guides.loc.gov/lgbtq-studies/stonewall-era] **In class:** discussing the readings
unit 2: read! watch! listen!		
Fri, Feb 14	**Intro to graphic novels**	**Before class:** read Kobabe, *Gender Queer* (first 74 pp. or more) [ELMS] and Alter, "How a Debut Graphic Memoir Became the Most Banned Book in the Country" [ELMS] **In class:** discussing graphic novels and *Gender Queer*'s book history **** introduce Close Reading assignment**
Week 4		
Mon, Feb 17	**Family Trauma & *Fun Home***	**Before class:** read "Analyzing Graphic Novels" [ELMS] and Bechdel, *Fun Home* Ch. 1 & 2 **In class:** discussing & analyzing *Fun Home*
Wed, Feb 19	**Family Trauma & *Fun Home***	**Before class:** read Bechdel, *Fun Home* Ch. 3, 4, & 5 **In class:** discussing & analyzing *Fun Home*
Fri, Feb 21	**Family Trauma & *Fun Home***	**Before class:** read Bechdel, *Fun Home* Ch. 6 & 7 and Quinan, "Alison Bechdel and the Queer Graphic Novel" [ELMS] **In class:** discussing & analyzing *Fun Home*
Week 5		

Mon, Feb 24	**Race, Class, Sexuality: *Moonlight***	**Before class:** read Wheeler, "*Moonlight* Changed the Game for Black, Queer Cinema" [https://www.them.us/story/moonlight-changed-the-game-for-black-queer-cinema] **In class:** in-class viewing of Jenkins's Moonlight: i. Little
Wed, Feb 26	**Race, Class, Sexuality: *Moonlight***	**Before class:** **In class:** in-class viewing of Jenkins's Moonlight: ii: Chiron
Fri, Feb 28	**Race, Class, Sexuality: *Moonlight***	**Before class:** **In class: i**n-class viewing of Jenkins's Moonlight: iii: Black
Week 6		
Mon, Mar 3	**Race, Class, Sexuality: *Moonlight***	**Before class:** read Ricco, "Mourning, Melancholia, *Moonlight*" [ELMS] **In class:** discussing *Moonlight*
Wed, Mar 5	**Masculinity & Queering the American West**	**Before class:** read Proulx, "Brokeback Mountain" [ELMS] and Capozzi, "The Myth of the American Cowboy" [ELMS] **In class:** discussing "Brokeback Mountain" and queer cowboys
Fri, Mar 7	**Queer Country**	**Before class:** read O'Brien, "The Queering of Country Music" [https://hmc.chartmetric.com/lgbtq-country-music/] and queer country handout [ELMS] **In class:** discussing Orville Peck, Chappell Roan, Cowboy Carter, etc.
Week 7		
Mon, Mar 10	**Burning Desire: *Portrait of a Lady on Fire***	**Before class:** **In class:** in-class viewing of Sciamma's *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* **** Close Reading assignment due on ELMS by 11:59pm!**
Wed, Mar 12	**Burning Desire: *Portrait of a Lady on Fire***	**Before class:** read Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" [ELMS] **In class:** in-class viewing of Sciamma's *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*
Fri, Mar 14	**Burning Desire: *Portrait of a Lady on Fire***	**Before class:** read Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" [ELMS]

		In class: in-class viewing of Sciamma's *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* & brief discussion
Week 8: Spring Break! No Class		
Mon, Mar 17	**Spring Break!**	No class
Wed, Mar 19	**Spring Break!**	No class
Fri, Mar 21	**Spring Break!**	No class
unit 3: make! collect! distribute!		
Week 9		
Mon, Mar 24	**Queer Zines**	**Before class:** Watch "Let's Talk About Zines and Why You Should Make One" [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FPMxDECh6ow] and look through the zines at the Queer Zine Archive Project [https://archive.qzap.org/], the Queer Zine Library [https://www.queerzinelibrary.com/] and read Werder, "A Labor Of Love: Why Zines Will Always Be An Important Part Of Queer Culture" [https://gomag.com/article/what-zines-mean-to-the-queer-community/] **In class:** in-class zine workshop w/ guest speaker Max Barnewitz **** introduce Zine assignment**
Wed, Mar 26	**Queer Bibliography, pt. 1**	**Before class:** read Noble & Pyke, "Queer Bibliography: A Rationale" [ELMS] and browse "Seized Books! An online exhibition" [https://www.london.ac.uk/about/services/senate-house-library/exhibitions/seized-books] **In class:** discussing queer bibliography
Fri, Mar 28	**Queer Bibliography, pt. 2**	**Before class:** read Adler, "'Let's Not Homosexualize the Library Stacks': Liberating Gays in the Library Catalog" [ELMS] and Grier, *Lesbian in Literature: A Bibliography* (excerpts) [ELMS] **In class:** discussing queer bibliography
Week 10		

Mon, Mar 31	**Queer Typography**	**Before class:** read Soulellis, *What Is Queer Typography?* [ELMS] and look at Pyper, "A Queer Year of Love Letters" [https://www.librarystack.org/a-queer-year-of-loveletters/] and Queer Fonts [https://queerfonts.design/] **In class:** discussing queer typography
Wed, Apr 2	**Queer Periodicals**	**Before class:** read Bronski, "Zines from a Revolution" [https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/150351/zines-from-a-revolution] and Carpenter, "The long legacy of LGBTQ print culture" [https://libnews.umn.edu/2023/12/the-long-legacy-of-lgbtq-print-culture/] **In class:** queer periodical research project (*Fag Rag, Parterre Box, BLK, ONE, My Comrade, Lesbian Tide, Anything That Moves*, etc.) **** introduce Final Project assignment**
Fri, Apr 4	**Queer Pulp**	**Before class:** read Gunn & Harker, "Introduction" to *1960s Gay Pulp Fiction: The Misplaced Heritage* [ELMS] **In class:** discussing pulp fiction and looking at examples **** Zine assignment due on ELMS by 11:59pm!**
Week 11		
Mon, Apr 7	**UMD BookLab**	**Before class:** before you come to BookLab browse the ONE Archive's "LGBTQ pride parade posters," ONE Archive's "Posters & Graphics from Early AIDS Activism," & Getty Images 1969 Stonewall Riot photo archive. **In class:** groups 1 and 2 visit to UMD BookLab (Tawes 3248)
Wed, Apr 9	**UMD BookLab**	**Before class:** before you come to BookLab browse the ONE Archive's "LGBTQ pride parade posters," ONE Archive's "Posters & Graphics from Early AIDS Activism," & Getty Images 1969 Stonewall Riot photo archive. **In class:** groups 3 and 4 visit to UMD BookLab (Tawes 3248)
Fri, Apr 11	**Queer Digital Cultures**	**No class** **at-home final project brainstorming day** **** Lavender Lens: Art assignment due on ELMS by 11:59pm!**

unit 4: play! perform! present!		
Week 12		
Mon, Apr 14	**Gayming, pt. 1**	**Before class:** watch Jones, *Gaming in Color* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zAm0LVeoJg0] and read Shaw, "Reclaiming video games' queer past before it disappears" (https://theconversation.com/reclaiming-video-games-queer-past-before-it-disappears-104045) **In class:** discussing the documentary and gayming
Wed, Apr 16	**Gayming, pt. 2**	**Before class:** read Ruberg, "Introduction" from *Video Games Have Always Been Queer* [ELMS] and "A Q&A With the Designer of the First LGBT Computer Game" [https://www.pastemagazine.com/games/caper-in-the-castro-interview] **In class:** playing *Caper in the Castro*, *GayBlade*, *Dys4ia*, *just cosplay, The Tearoom,* and *Hard Lads*
Fri, Apr 18	**TTRPGs and Queer Expression**	**Before class:** read Carter, *They Came to Slay: The Queer Culture of DnD* (excerpts) [ELMS] and optional viewing: Dimension 20, *Dungeons and Drag Queens* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MZhCgp-GRQ8] **In class:** in-class TTRP session
Week 13		
Mon, Apr 21	**Queer Art**	**Before class:** browse Queer Art History [https://www.queerarthistory.com/] **In class:** discussing queer art and browsing our Lavender Lens: Art online gallery **** Final Project Proposals due on ELMS by 11:59pm!**
Wed, Apr 23	**Drag History & *Paris is Burning***	**Before class:** read "drag intro slides" [ELMS] & watch *Paris is Burning* [ELMS] **In class:** no class! Watch *Paris is Burning* at home--- it's a short documentary film (1hr 18 min).
Fri, Apr 25	**Drag History & *Paris is Burning***	**Before class:** read Green, "Paris Has Burned" [ELMS] and Soulellis, "Reading" [https://soulellis.substack.com/p/reading] **In class:** discussing *Paris is Burning*

Week 14		
Mon, Apr 28	**Queer Space: ballrooms, bars, & clubs**	**Before class:** read "Then & Now: Boots" [Web: https://thenandnowtoronto.com/2014/12/then-now-boots/], Smith, "The 17-Year-Old & the Gay Bar" [ELMS], and read Pavka, "What Do We Mean by Queer Space?" [Web: https://www.azuremagazine.com/article/what-do-we-mean-by-queer-space/] **In class:** discussing queer space
Wed, Apr 30	**RuPaul's Drag Race**	**Before class:** read Edgar, ""Xtravaganza!": Drag Representation and Articulation in *RuPaul's Drag Race*" [ELMS] **In class:** watching and discussing *RuPaul's Drag Race* clips
Fri, May 2	**Hornbake Library Special Collections visit**	**Before class:** look over the list of materials we'll see in Hornbake (I'll circulate this spreadsheet via ELMS) **In class:** meet in Hornbake Instruction Room (3210; third floor) to look at physical queer media materials
Week 15		
Mon, May 5	**Final Project Presentations**	Final Project presentations
Wed, May 7	**Final Project Presentations**	Final Project presentations
Fri, May 9	**Final Project Presentations**	Final Project presentations
Week 16		
Mon, May 12	**Final Project Presentations**	Final Project presentations
Fri, May 16	**Final Projects Due**	**** Final Projects due on ELMS by 11:59pm!**